

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Vermont Educators and Administrators
FROM: Marta B. Cambra, Director of Educator Quality
SUBJECT: Field Tests of the *Vermont Online Licensing System for Educators*
DATE: February 12, 2014

The Agency of Education (AOE) would like to announce the upcoming field tests of the *Vermont Online Licensing System for Educators*. Beginning the week of February 24, 2014, the system will become available for controlled field testing that will continue through the end of June 2014. As you know, information systems like this require a thorough testing before going to "live operation." These field tests will "stress test" the various components of the system in a limited "live" environment. We will be looking for any components that do not operate optimally as well as any other issues that have not been identified through the normal design operations. Initially, licensed Vermont educators will have the opportunity to register in the system, and view and update their personal information. From February through June, the AOE will be conducting field tests for all application types, beginning with the 2014 renewals. All field test participants will be held harmless from system issues should they arise. The purpose of the field tests are for participants to identify any system issues that will need to be corrected prior to the full launch to the field.

The decision to conduct field tests was made due to:

- A survey of renewing educators that indicated 90% preferred to submit paper applications for the 2014 renewal cycle;
- The AOE's impending move to a new location in Barre in early-March, which will cause a disruption in staff availability to support the field; and
- The current reduction of staff in the Office of Educator Licensing posing a challenge to meet the potential needs of users in the online system at this time. It is the Licensing Office's intent to provide the degree of support necessary to all participants and to ensure a successful launch.

As previously announced, paper renewal applications have been sent to all educators renewing their licenses in 2014. The Renewal Field Test will begin in late-February. The AOE has invited a select group of renewing educators and their Local and/or Regional Standards Boards (L/RSBs) to participate as the first field testers of the new online system when it launches. Renewal Field Test groups are being formed by considering the following:

- Educators and/or their affiliated L/RSBs who had responded to the survey, previously participated in focus groups, system requirement discussions, prototype reviews, and accepted the Agency's invitation;
- Geographic representation from all areas of the state; and

- A cross-section of renewal types (Level I, Level II, Retired – Teachers and Administrators).

The groups represent five Vermont regions, LSBs, RSBs, and approximately 250 educators. Educators participating in the Renewal Field Test will be notified electronically to complete their renewal applications online.

The AOE is currently preparing training materials and planning trainings for the 2014 Renewal Field Test. On-site, virtual, and regional site trainings will begin when the system launches and continue through the end of the current renewal cycle; June 30, 2014. Throughout the Renewal Field Test and in all other field tests, the AOE will collect feedback from the field to inform future trainings, help documentation, and consider possible changes to the online system if necessary.

Similar plans will be developed this spring to field test temporary licenses (emergency, provisional, and apprenticeship) and other licensing processes. Small controlled groups will be selected for these field tests. These field tests will put the Agency in a better position to provide the necessary support and resources during the system's anticipated full rollout. In addition, the field tests will help the Agency conduct validation of the system with a limited group before it becomes 100% accessible to all educators.

Please note: any participant in these field tests will be held harmless from system issues should they arise.

This plan has the support of Secretary of Education Rebecca Holcombe, Deputy Commissioner John Fischer, the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE), and Vermont-NEA. Stay tuned for the announcement of the full launch date for the *Vermont Online Licensing System for Educators*. The AOE looks forward to working with all stakeholders to support the success of the full system rollout.